

2007 DEPLOYMENT OF MARINE
SPECIAL OPERATIONS TASK
FORCE**HON. DANA ROHRABACHER**

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 6, 2018

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Mr. Speaker, I rise to inform my colleagues that on March 4, 2007 the first deployment of a Marine Special Operations Task Force to combat in Afghanistan was conducting a combat reconnaissance patrol in the village of Bati Kot, Afghanistan near the Afghan-Pakistan border when they were attacked by enemy forces who used a car bomb and a complex ambush consisting of groups of fighters on both sides of the road and a sniper element. The Marines courageously counter-attacked the enemy with accurate firepower and immediately reported the situation from the ambush site using satellite radio and data transmissions to their special operations command center as was factually proven through eye-witness testimony during legal proceedings.

The most significant element of this engagement was the fact that the Marine unit did not choose the battlefield. As so often has happened, the terrorist element who attacked the Marines intentionally chose to launch their ambush while in an area where many non-combatants would be put in grave danger. The terrorists were hiding behind innocent residents knowing many would be caught in the crossfire.

The Marines smartly departed the ambush site after five minutes and continued to receive enemy gunfire and sniper fire from multiple enemy positions. Twenty minutes following the attack the Marines returned to their patrol base and were informed that reports of Ma-

rines murdering Afghan civilians including women and children had already been announced in the international media. These reports of Marines committing civilian atrocities swiftly grew in the international media and a command investigation was ordered by the Commanding General of the Special Operations Command Central in Tampa, Florida. Only one day following the arrival of the command investigator who had heard testimony from only ten Marines who were on the patrol the entire Marine Special Operations Task Force consisting of 120 personnel were ordered out of Afghanistan and faced a criminal investigation led by Naval Criminal Investigation Services into accusations of negligent homicide.

The Marines returned home in disgrace, several were relieved of their duties prior to the investigation being completed and were subject to greater slander by the international media of a war crime that alleged killing 19 Afghan civilians and wounding 50 Afghan civilians without ever having any prima facie evidence of a bullet, a body or even a photograph of a murdered Afghan.

NCIS' investigation lasted over one year and utilized techniques that centered on strong arm tactics against two Marine witnesses of Latino ethnicity to include repeated coercion and false threats made against their families and careers if they did not comply with their unlawful requests for taking an "ordered" polygraphs and signing NCIS' prepared witness statements.

Seven of these Marines who were falsely accused of war crimes were continually vilified in the press, families and careers were ruined from countless statements in the press for over one year after the alleged massacre took place. Over four months following a 3.5 week courtroom trial the Marine Corps Central Command released a short statement that, "the

Marines 'acted appropriately' according to the rules of engagement and tactics, techniques and procedures for a complex ambush." This statement enraged many Afghans and led to rioting in Afghanistan meanwhile the press continued to print libelous statements for eight more years accusing the Marines of having committed these crimes and not being punished. However, the Marines continued to serve their Corps and faithfully deployed to combat in Afghanistan and other locations overseas, with these repeated libelous statements being written and believed as facts in the media, books and many military senior commands.

The effects were devastating to the seven Marines health (including fighting cancer and diabetes), destroying marriages and the careers of these Marines who continued to faithfully serve.

It is time that the record be clearly be told that the Marines from the first Marine Special Operations Task Force were proven in court to have been attacked by enemy forces and the Marines fought with courage as they killed enemy forces, immediately and accurately reported the events to their command and were subsequently unethically interrogated by NCIS and in the media using methods that caused permanent destruction to their health, families and careers.

These reports of war crimes were unsubstantiated, and these Marines deserve to be recognized for their courage as they encountered the enemy who inflicted the first casualty on a U.S. Marine from the Marine Special Operations Command and these Marines all deserve their God given rights to pursue happiness and not suffer the professional embarrassment of these false accusations of war crimes.